

Quality Criteria for Sustainable Products & Services developed in the DUNC Project

BACKGROUND

The DUNC project (Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural Assets) aims at developing the potential of natural and cultural assets in the south Baltic Sea region in order for them to become more sustainable tourist destinations. One aspect of this is the development of sustainable products and services at the project's participating World Heritage Sites:

- **the Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland (Sweden)**
- **the Naval Port of Karlskrona (Sweden)**
- **the historic centres of Wismar and Stralsund (Germany)**
- **the Curonian Spit (Lithuania)**

More sustainable and innovative products and services will contribute to the promotion of these sites, attract more visitors, prolong the tourist season and strengthen local businesses. This facilitates and enables preservation and development of the World Heritage Sites in the

project and in their nearby surroundings, as well as increasing knowledge, pride and awareness of them as unique assets with unique responsibilities.

In order to have a common ground for the development of sustainable quality products and services in the DUNC project, common areas of importance were identified and documented. The three aspects of sustainability; environmental, social and economic sustainability, naturally were used as a point of departure in specifying these quality criteria. A common concept template has additionally been used initially in each development process, as a first evaluation of the product or service idea. The concepts created for each product or service are going to be shared with local entrepreneurs and stakeholders, for inspiration and international contacts for cross-border cooperation.

With this document, DUNC wants to share with stakeholders the underlying quality criteria for products and services developed in the project during 2017-2020 with stakeholders. The products and services are developed with the intention of being implemented at more sites in the south Baltic Sea region in the future. Attached to the document you will find a record and short description of the products and services developed in the project, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) they have contributed to fulfil. For example, all products and services naturally support SDG target 11.4: Protect the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage.

1. Criteria for Environmental Sustainability

1.1 Tourist Season Prolongation

DUNC aims at promoting the World Heritage Sites in the project as destinations to visit all year-round, and has developed several low season products and services to encourage this. The development of off-season products and services contributes to prolong the tourist season and avoid the challenges of an unbalanced, unsustainable seasonal pattern with a high visitor impact during specific times of the year. Low season tourism promotion stimulates economic growth and creates more job opportunities for local people and businesses. Groups identified as eager to travel during the low season are for example seniors and young people.

Examples of products and services developed in the DUNC project with tourist season prolongation in mind are for example the Curonian Spit promotional video and travel guide. They promote the area as an all year-round destination for people of all ages. The Curonian Spit has also made new costumes for off-season theatrical guided tours. In Karlskrona, the product The Virtual World Heritage 360 makes it possible to visit parts of the World Heritage virtually, whenever you want to, even from home, through guided tours filmed in 360-video technique.

1.2 Sustainable Materials

The materials used to develop products and services should be environmentally friendly as far as possible. To choose sustainable materials means selecting high quality materials with a long lifespan and a low environmental impact. It also means considering where the material will be used after the lifecycle of the product or service has ended. To be reused is slightly better than being recycled, since it will reduce the need for new materials to be produced in the future. A longer-lasting product or service also means lower maintenance costs. Examples of sustainable materials are bamboo, wood, hemp, wool, linen, straw, clay, stone, sand, beeswax and coconut. These materials are not harmful neither for the manufacturer or the end user.

The Art and Crafts book for children designed in Karlskrona is printed on environmentally

friendly paper and has the Nordic Swan Ecolabel. Users are also encouraged to recycle the book.

In Wismar DUNC has developed a World Heritage Trail, encouraging visitors to walk from a hotel area to the World Heritage City Centre. Along the trail information stations are created, made of brick. This is a long-lasting material that will require little maintenance.

1.3 Renewable Energy Sources

The products and services should make use of renewable energy sources, for example solar energy, when applicable. Renewable energy sources are forms of sustainable energy, they have low environmental impact and are naturally replenished. Renewable energy reduces environmental pollution, such as air pollution caused by burning of fossil fuels, and improves public health. Examples of renewable energy sources are wind, geothermal, hydropower, wave, solar and tidal power.

DUNC products and services produced with renewable energy sources are the solar cell benches placed on southern Öland and the solar powered eco mobile bicycle station placed in the Curonian Spit. They have contributed to the fulfilment of SDG target 7.2: Increase Global Percentage of Renewable Energy.

1.4 Sustainable Travel

Sustainable travel means finding a way to maintain long-term tourism that does not harm natural and cultural environments. The negative impacts of tourism should be minimized and the benefits for the area of concern optimized. One way of doing this is to encourage people to visit sites in their vicinity, instead of going far away on holiday. Trains, ferries and bicycles are more environmentally friendly transportation options than cars and airplanes. Through cross-border promotion of the participating sites in the project, DUNC wants to increase the interest and awareness of nearby holiday options for tourists in the south Baltic Sea region, and encourage sustainable travel. This is in line with the SDG target 8.9: Promote Beneficial and Sustainable Tourism.

The DUNC products and services are also developed with the intention of being implemented at more sites in the south Baltic Sea region in the future. The concepts created for each product or service are shared with local entrepreneurs and stakeholders, for inspiration and international contacts for cross-border cooperation. DUNC believes this is yet another way to further strengthen the connection and networking between the sites, and to promote the region as one destination with common interests.

DUNC actively supports cycling and hiking activities on Öland, in the Curonian Spit and in Wismar. In Karlskrona DUNC has cooperated with the Ark56 initiative that connects hiking-, cycling- and kayaking trails throughout Blekinge. Thanks to our cooperation the bicycle trail now goes through the central part of the Karlskrona World Heritage instead of passing by it.

2. Criteria for Social Sustainability

2.1 Encourage outdoor experiences

The products and services developed in DUNC should encourage and facilitate for people to leave their car at home and explore the sites by foot and/or by bicycle instead. This decreases the environmental impact of visitors while at the same time increasing their health. The sites in the project offer excellent opportunities for outdoor experiences for the whole family.

An improved infrastructure makes it easier for people to enjoy sustainable outdoor activities in natural and cultural heritages, and for them to stay longer in one place.

Examples of products that likely will attract people to stay out in nature and to exercise more are the solar cell stations placed on hiking/bicycle routes in Öland and the Curonian Spit, as well as the World Heritage Bike Route in southern Öland and the World Heritage Trail in Wismar.

The trail in Wismar is a good example on how you can work with SDG target 11.6: Reduce the Environmental Impact of Cities.

2.3 Gender Equality

Women and men should have equal opportunities and rights and should be equally addressed. If half of our population are denied to live their life at its fullest, that is a tremendous waste of the world's human potential. It is also important that both girls and boys have access to strong role models and heroes of both sexes to look up to, through history and today.

A gender neutral character with a unisex name, Eli, was chosen as the central figure in the Karlskrona Art and Crafts Book for children. In that way both girls and boys are able to identify themselves with the main character. The aim was also to keep a balance in the book between women and men of great importance in the history of Karlskrona.

In Wismar the DUNC team has developed a guidebook for children, where the content has been created by local boys and local girls. Both genders have been involved equally in the creation and contributed with their best tips for visitors.

2.4 Educational efforts

As SDG target 12.8, Promote Universal Understanding of Sustainable Lifestyles, describes it is important that people have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with the nature. DUNC believes it is crucial to work on educational efforts for both young people and adults. Our future is shaped partly by the young population. It is therefore important to inspire and educate them at an early age to make them proud of where they come from, and teach them the value of taking care of and preserving unique heritage surroundings. The more you know of a place the prouder you will be of it, more likely to speak well of it and less prone to damage it.

Examples of products considering this are the Coloring Book for children created in Stralsund, the Art and Crafts Book for children designed in Karlskrona and the Guide Book for Cool Girls and Boys in Wismar.

For adults DUNC has created the ambassador programme, where locals have been trained as ambassadors. The participants have gained a greater understanding of their World Heritage sites and also other subjects such as sustainability and how to be a welcoming host to visitors. To further raise the awareness and respect for the world-unique sites among inhabitants and visitors, the DUNC partners have created informational films.

3. Criteria for Economic Sustainability

3.1. Keeping it local

DUNC believe in international best practice exchange regarding product development, sustainability and promotion of the World Heritage Sites in the project. However, with regard to the production

chain of products and services it should stay local. By engaging and encouraging local businesses in the development work, the economic benefits will remain in the region and can be reused for further investments in the nearby surroundings. Providers are of course also encouraged to have sustainability in all three aspects (social, environmental and economic sustainability) implemented in their corporate plan.

3.2 Circular economy

A circular economy aims at eliminating waste by reducing the consumption of natural resources. Waste should be considered sustenance for other processes, which is an approach in contrast to the traditional linear economy. A sustainable world does not have to mean a decrease in consumer quality or extra costs for manufacturers. It can be as profitable as linear alternatives. A circular system means to repair, refurbish, reuse, recycle, share or remanufacture to create a close-loop system.

3.3 Long-term economic growth

If maintained properly, a World Heritage nomination is a quality mark that never disappears. People naturally tend to associate products and services from a World Heritage site with high quality. Therefore, it is considered a logical and long-lasting way of promoting products and services through a World Heritage Site and its outstanding universal values.

All products and services developed in the DUNC project naturally have a connection to the participating World Heritage sites, and in Öland and in the Curonian Spit they are working on developing a common brand to use for products and services created there.

To help local businesses to better use the possibilities offered by the connection to a World Heritage site, we have been cooperating with Tony Watson, chief of marketing at the English Lake District World Heritage. Their success in using the World Heritage as an engine of sustainable growth has inspired us and opened the eyes of local entrepreneurs.





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Disclaimer

The contents of these “Quality Criteria for Sustainable Products and Services developed in the DUNC Project” are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union, the Managing Authority or the Joint Secretariat of the South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020.

